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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turkish Parliament to Discuss Joining Lebanon International Force
All papers report that the Turkish Parliament will discuss and vote in an emergency session on Tuesday the government motion concerning participation of Turkish troops in the international peacekeeping force for Lebanon. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will address the lawmakers to defend the motion. Zaman reports Gul as saying that the Turkish military supported troop deployment. Gul asked yesterday in an interview on the all-news broadcaster NTV why Turkey should not participate in the international force when Spain and Italy, countries which have already pulled out of Iraq, are sending troops to Lebanon. Cumhuriyet reports the military believed the preparation and training of troops would take at least one month. Prime Minister Erdogan reassured that the Turkish troops will not be involved in the disarming of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Erdogan stressed that Turkey will pull back troops if it is asked to participate in an effort to disarm various militia groups in the country. Opposition parties and NGOs are to hold a mass rally in Ankara today to demonstrate against the deployment as the parliament continues discussions. The NGOs and the main opposition CHP have been maintaining a strong campaign against the deployment, claiming that Turkish soldiers would be forced to engage in clashes with the Hezbollah guerrillas. Turkish opposition claims safety guarantees are not yet in place. UNSYG Kofi Annan is due in Ankara on Tuesday evening for talks with Turks on Wednesday. Papers expect some 30 AKP MPs to vote against the motion, a number not sufficient to reject the bill in the 550-seat parliament in which AKP holds an absolute majority. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who generally vetoes such controversial bills coming from the AKP, has no right to do so with the troop deployment motion. Papers also expect some 1000 Turkish soldiers to serve in Lebanon under the UN mandate for a year.

Editorial Commentary on Lebanon Troop Deployment
Sami Kohen writes in the mainstream Milliyet: "The vote in the Turkish parliament is not only going to determine whether Turkey

should send troops to Lebanon but also will shape the course of Turkey's foreign policy. The government predominantly seems in favor of sending troops while the opposition as well as political groups and NGOs are against it. Recent public surveys also indicate a similar tendency with approximately 80 percent giving saying 'no' to participation. All of this indicates that even if the government manages to pass the motion, the execution of this decision will not be very easy due to harsh criticism and accusations. The government should think about postponing the decision process in light of popular opposition and its potential reflection in the implementation process."

Asli Aydintasbas defends the motion in the mass appeal Sabah: "Sending troops to Lebanon will bring prestige to Turkey and also it will give Turkey a say internationally. Turkey strives to be a regional player and a big state. Big states cannot stay aloof to problems in their backyards. It is also important that both Hezbollah and Israel are favorable to Turkey sending troops. Ankara has already made it clear that disarming Hezbollah is not going to be the Turkish army's job. The reasons for not sending troops are not justifiable especially when the EU is participating in the peacekeeping mission with 7000 soldiers. In the end, there are certainly disadvantages, but the advantages are strong enough to justify that Turkey has to be there. The parliamentary motion should be adopted."

Guneri Civaoglu observes in the mainstream Milliyet: "There is a vast majority, including the US, Israel, the UNSG, Islamic countries and Lebanon, with the exception of Armenian community, who want to see Turkey's participation in the peacekeeping force. The Turkish army has assumed many missions abroad, from Kosovo to Somalia to Afghanistan, achieving many humanitarian and peace-oriented missions. If the army is goes to Lebanon under a well-defined

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mission plan, Ankara will have a stronger hand vis-`-vis the international community. It will also help Turkey make arguments about the devastating PKK terrorism to the US and others. As for the comparison with the March 1 [2003] parliamentary motion on the Iraq war, things are different at the moment. March 1 was asking the Turkish army to on a foreign mission on the eve of a war, while this motion is in support of ceasefire and peacekeeping mission."

Erdogan 'Indifferent' to Suffering of Families of Terrorism Victims
All papers: Addressing a crowd at a ground breaking ceremony in the western Turkish city of Balikesir, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said in response to shouts from the crowd protesting a recent killing of conscripts in the southeast by the PKK that the fight against terrorism was a long-term campaign that inevitably would claim lives. "The military is no place for soldiers to be idle and do nothing. Turkish parents used to send their children to the army telling them to get martyred if necessary," Erdogan stated. Radikal says Erdogan later tried to soften his words by saying that military compounds were different from tourist facilities and that military service involved risks. "It is not easy to become a martyr," Erdogan said. Mainstream papers strongly criticize the PM for being indifferent to the grievances of the people.

Critical Turkey Report from the European Parliament
Cumhuriyet, Hurriyet, Radikal, Sabah and others: The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (EP) adopted the report on Turkey's progress towards accession on Monday. The committee added some paragraphs to the report which include harsher language against Turkey. The draft report criticized a number of issues, including Cyprus, a slowdown in the EU reform process, the situation in the southeast, problems with religious minorities, cultural rights and civilian-military relations. The EP, in the report, reiterated its call to Turkey to recognize so-called Armenian genocide prior to its full EU membership. The report claimed that Turkey committed genocide against Pontus Greeks and Assyrians in addition to Armenians.

Imam's Murderer Lynched at Ismailaga Mosque in Istanbul
All papers (today and yesterday): An angry group of worshippers lynched a man at the Ismailaga Mosque in Istanbul's conservative district of Fatih, minutes after he stabbed a retired imam during

religious debates. Both the Imam, Bayram Ali Ozturk, and the attacker, Mustafa Erdal, were killed in the incident on Sunday morning. Although autopsy reports confirmed that Erdal was lynched, and the Ismailaga religious community, on their internet site, reported that they lynched Mustafa Erdal, police did not detain anyone in connection with the killing of Erdal. Moreover, they announced that Erdal committed suicide. Yesterday's Hurriyet reported that the Ismailaga sect is one of the most radical groups of the Naksibendi religious sect and linked to the Islamic terrorist group IBDA-C. This is the second attack on an imam inside the mosque, as in 1998 another imam was shot dead while preaching to a group, Hurriyet adds.

TV Highlights
NTV (8 A.M.)

Domestic News

- At least 10,000 attended the funeral of a Turkish soldier killed in fighting with the PKK militants in the mainly Kurdish southeastern province of Diyarbakir.
- The Turkish General Staff (TGS) said it captured the defector accused of causing the killing of Turkish soldiers in the Hakkari by informing to the PKK the positions of troops in the southeastern border province.

- President Kurmanbek Bakiyev of Kyrgyzstan arrived in Ankara on

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Monday as the official guest of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha will pay a visit to Turkey on September 5-6.

- International investor Morgan Stanley has predicted the year-end inflation in Turkey will stand at 9.2 percent with the country's economy showing signs of normalization.

International News

- United Nations Secretary General Annan stated Israel and Hezbollah have agreed to have the UN act as a go-between in the dispute over the abduction of an Israeli soldier which sparked a month-long war.

- Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, visiting Pakistan as the official guest of President Musharraf, secured the backing of Islamabad concerning the removal of international sanctions on Turkish Cyprus.

- Britain's Independent said President Bush's policy of using excessive military force to fight fundamentalism seems to have backfired, spawning an epidemic of global terrorism.

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